

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 106074  
ORIGIN NEA-02

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DRAFTED BY: NEA:EGABINGTON:BDF

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

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FOR HIRSCH

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN, CAIRO,  
DAMASCUS, JERUSALEM FROM TEL AVIV MAY 06:

QUOTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TEL AVIV 3187

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MENAHEM BEGIN

1. CHARGE' AND POLITICAL OFFICER MET WITH MENAHEM BEGIN  
IN HIS HOME ON MAY 4. THE DISCUSSION OPENED WITH THE  
ELECTION NIGHT SCHEDULE AND THE GOVERNMENT-FORMATION  
PROCESS. BEGIN SAID THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS COVERING  
ALL BUT FIVE OR SIX SEATS WOULD BE KNOWN BY THREE OR  
FOUR A.M. MAY 18 (LOCAL TIME). DISTRIBUTION OF THE  
REMAINING FEW SEATS WOULD DEPEND ON THE SOLDIER VOTE,  
ABSENTEE BALLOTS, AND THE ALLOCATION OF VOTES FOR  
PARTIES THAT FAILED TO REACH THE MINIMUM NECESSARY  
FOR A SEAT. THE RESULTS WILL BE OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED  
TWO WEEKS AFTER ELECTION DAY; FOLLOWING SEPARATE  
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CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL THE PARTY LEADERS, THE  
PRESIDENT ON THE FOLLOWING MONDAY (JUNE 6) WILL GIVE TO  
ONE OF THEM THE MANDATE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT.  
THE PARTY LEADER CHOSEN THEN WILL HAVE THREE  
WEEKS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT; THIS CAN BE EXTENDED  
FOR THREE MORE. IF HE FAILS, THE PRESIDENT WILL  
TURN TO THE LEADER OF ANOTHER PARTY, ALTHOUGH

THEORETICALLY HE COULD EXTEND THE MANDATE TO ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL OF THE FIRST PARTY.

2. BEGIN PROFESSED TO SEE THE POLLS AS UNCLEAR IN THEIR CONCLUSIONS. HE NOTED THAT THE LIKUD WAS STRONG AMONG THE YOUTH, PARTICULARLY ON CAMPUSES AND IN THE MILITARY; AND HE THOUGHT THIS A HOPEFUL SIGN FOR THE FUTURE.

3. HE DISMISSED THE SUGGESTION HEARD FROM SEVERAL QUARTERS THAT THE LIKUD WOULD OFFER YADIN THE PREMIERSHIP AS AN INDUCEMENT FOR THE DMC TO JOIN A COALITION WITH THE LIKUD, COMMENTING THAT IF THE LIKUD IS THE LARGER PARTY IT WOULD BE UNDEMOCRATIC FOR IT TO PRESENT THE PREMIERSHIP TO ITS JUNIOR COALITION PARTNER. HE DID NOT THINK THAT THE DMC'S SEVEN CONDITIONS FOR ITS PARTICIPATION IN A GOVERNMENT (SEE SEPTTEL) OFFERED INSUPERABLE OBSTACLES TO THE LIKUD. THE FOREIGN POLICY CONDITION (THAT THERE BE NO POLICY CONTRADICTING THE DMC PLATFORM) COULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE LIKUD. BEGIN WOULD ALSO ACCEPT ELECTORAL REFORM, ALTHOUGH NOT ELECTIONS WITHIN TWO YEARS BECAUSE, HE EXPLAINED, ANOTHER ELECTION SO SOON AFTER THIS ONE WOULD BE REJECTED BY THE PUBLIC. THE PEOPLE WANT ACTION AND A KNESSET ELECTION MENAS VIRTUAL GOVERNMENT PARALYSIS FOR SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO THE POLLING DATE. HE WAS SURE THAT THE DMC WOULD ACCEPT A COMPROMISE WHICH WOULD INVOLVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELECTORAL REFORM BUT NOT EARLY ELECTIONS.

4. BEGIN SPOKE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A POST-ELECTION ALIGNMENT WITH THE NRP. HE HAD RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM NRP LEADERS THAT THEY WOULD COOPERATE WITH THE LIKUD. THE NRP'S YOUNGER ELEMENTS SAW EYE-TO-EYE WITH HIM, AND AN ARRANGEMENT COULD BE FOUND WITH THE RELIGIOUS PARTY TO ENHANCE THE LIKUD'S PROSPECTS OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT.

5. HE SAW NO POSSIBILITY OF AN ALIGNMENT-LIKUD COALITION. HE NOTED MORE IN SORROW THAN ANGER THAT PERES (WHOM HE LIKES AND REGARDS AS A FRIEND) HAD MADE A COMMITMENT TO MAPAM NOT TO ENTER SUCH A COALITION. MOREOVER, MANY IN THE LIKUD OPPOSE A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY; THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT AFTER 29 YEARS THE ALIGNMENT MUST GO INTO OPPOSITION. NEVERTHELESS, HE REMAINS OF THE OPINION THAT A WALL-TO-WALL COALITION OF ALL

PARTIES EXCEPT RAKAH WAS A POSSIBILITY. (HE ALSO  
THOUGHT THAT SHELI WOULD DECLINE THE INVITATION.)

6. TURNING TO THE CAMPAIGN, BEGIN GOOD-NATUREDLY  
COMPLAINED ABOUT AN ALIGNMENT TV COMMERCIAL  
SHOWING A DISMAYED ISRAELI PUBLIC ON THE MORROW  
OF A LIKUD VICTORY. HE SAID HE HAD TAKEN PERES  
TO TASK FOR THE COMMERCIAL AND THE LATTER HAD  
APOLOGIZED. BEGIN ADMITTED THAT ONE OF THE  
LIKUD'S ADS (LUMPING PERES WITH ASHER YADLIN AND  
AVRAHAM OFER) ALSO WAS IN BAD TASTE.

7. BEGIN FAVORS A CRACK AT AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT  
AND SAID THAT A LIKUD GOVERNMENT WOULD GO TO GENEVA.  
IT WOULD HAVE TO BE FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRE-  
CONDITIONS, HOWEVER. HE EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN OVER  
WHAT HE CHARACTERIZED AS HINTS OF A RETREAT BY THE ADMINISTRATION  
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FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM COMMITMENT NOT TO IMPOSE A SETTLEMENT.

8. COMMENT: CONSIDERING HIS ILLNESS (BEGIN SAID HE  
HAD BOTH PNEUMONIA AND A HEART ATTACK) HE LOOKED  
QUITE FIT--MUCH BETTER THAN HE HAD THE PREVIOUS  
WEEK ON TV. JUDGING FROM THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE HE  
IS SEEING NOW, HE SEEMS TO HAVE RETURNED TO A  
FAIRLY ACTIVE SCHEDULE. HOWEVER, THERE WAS A  
NOTICEABLE ABSENCE OF EXUBERANCE OVER THE  
ELECTION OR CONFIDENCE THAT HE WOULD HEAD THE  
NEXT GOVERNMENT. UNLIKE HIS CAMPAIGN MANAGER,  
EZER WEIZMAN, BEGIN MADE NO CLAIMS ABOUT WINNING  
THE ELECTION--AND IN THIS HE IS ALMOST  
CERTAINLY RIGHT. DUNNIGAN UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Concepts:** ELECTION RESULTS  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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